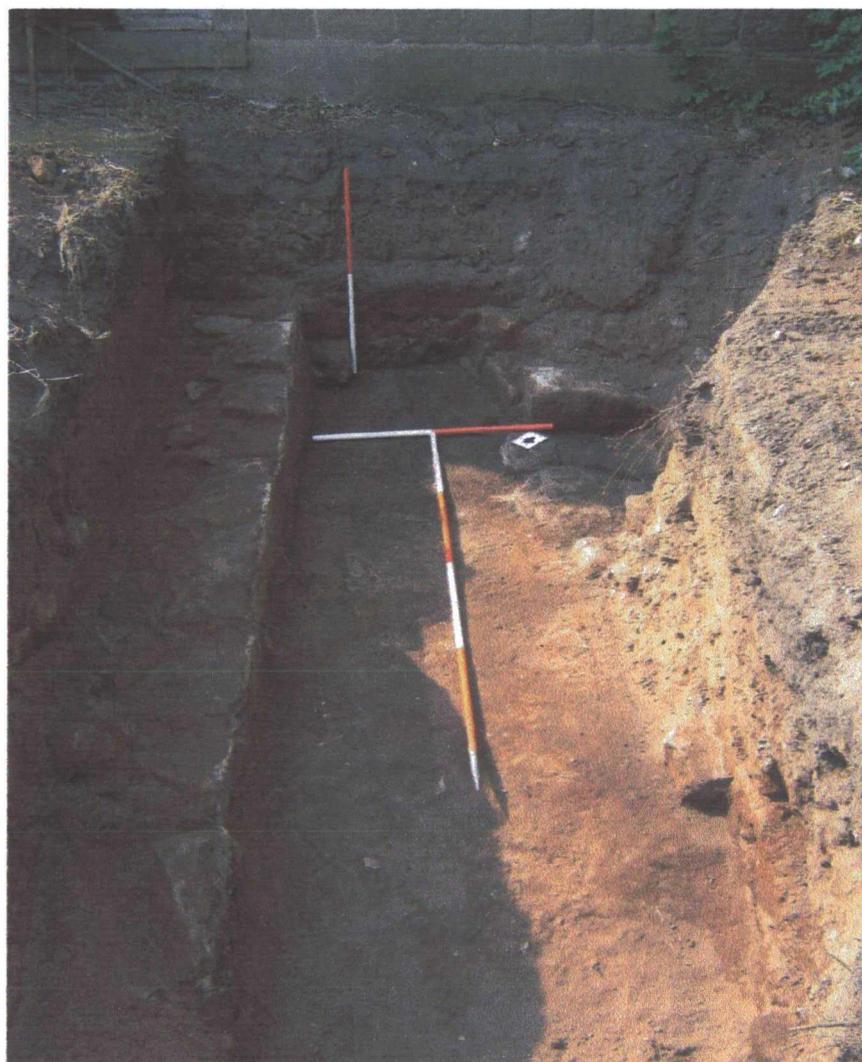


**HIGH STREET, SPOFFORTH
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

NYCC HER	
SNY	11370
ENY	3226
CNY	4801
Parish	6122
Rec'd	11.01.07



JB Archaeological Services

On behalf of

Mr & Mrs Hare

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**11-13 HIGH STREET, SPOFFORTH
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Summary

As a result of a planning application for the erection of a new dwelling on the 11-13 High Street in Spofforth (SE 3642 5083) an archaeological watching brief was placed on the ground reduction works for the scheme. The ground works included not only the overall lowering of the eastern end of the site for the new building but the insertion of service trenches between the building and the current road. The watching brief on the various ground works were undertaken between the July and September 2006.

The results of the watching brief showed that there were the remains of a narrow, probably single storey, building running along the eastern frontage of the plot adjacent to the modern public highway. The building had been constructed from a single thickness of roughly squared sandstone blocks which had been built directly into a recess cut into the slope of the hillside. The building had no foundations and internally the walls above the beaten earth floor had been covered with a lime based plaster. The building appears to have undergone a small extension to the south where there was no stone work and here the limit of the building had been simply formed by cutting the earth bank away and plastering the resulting face. The northern end of the building had been partially truncated by the construction of the wash house to the farm which formally stood to the north of the current development site. A doorway out to the street was recorded towards the northern end of the building on its eastern side.

No stratified artefacts were recovered from the building and the nature of its construction was not readily dateable. However the presence of 19th century and later material in the upper part of the backfill of structure would seem to indicate a late 18th or early 19th century date.

No other archaeological finds or features were recorded on the development site.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief on the ground works for the ground reduction and service trenches to, and location of, a new dwelling between 11-13 High Street, Spofforth, North Yorkshire (SE 3642 5083), in Spofforth with Stockfield Civil Parish.
- 1.2 The watching brief was conducted by JB Archaeological Services (JBAS) for the Mr and Mrs Hare and was carried out between July and September 2006.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Historic Background

- 2.1 The settlement of Spofforth has a long history with the name being first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Spofoord* and then again in 1218 as *Spotford*. The name derives from the Old English *spot* and *ford* meaning 'ford by a small plot of ground' (Mills, 1998, 321). Evidence for the existence of a substantial settlement is attested to by the discovery of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at what was Village Farm.
- 2.2 The castle at Spofforth was the seat of the Percy family and was granted a licence to crenellate in 1308 and is probably built on the remains of earlier structures (Muir 1997, 179).
- 2.3 The modern settlement has developed along the main roads running through the village though little evidence for the earlier settlement remains visible.

Geology and Soils

- 2.4 The site lies in the small valley formed by Crimple Beck in an area of Carboniferous sandstone (Butlin, 2003, 10). Overlying this, the quaternary geology is one that has been modified to a degree by glacial till and moranic drift. The soil weathered from this is normally relatively thin and of low fertility but the area of the site has been used for many years as a vegetable plot for the adjacent dwellings and as such had become a much better developed, humic soil.

Topography and Land-use

- 2.5 The plot is situated on the western side of the High Street in Spofforth at a height of c.40mOD and, as mentioned above, until its development it was in use as a vegetable garden. The land has a moderate slope running uphill to the west from the edge of the plot boundary adjacent to the road. The eastern boundary wall retains the bottom edge of the slope at a height of c.1.2m above the public footpath. The surrounding area is residential housing.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objective of the watching brief was to identify and record any features of archaeological interest revealed or damaged during the works for the ground

reduction and the insertion of any associated service trenches. The specific aims were to:

- Archaeologically record (graphically and photographically) any archaeological features revealed or disturbed by the ground works
- Recover any archaeological artefacts and environmental material exposed by the ground works

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 The stripping of the topsoil and ground reduction was carried out by contractors using a tracked mini-digger with a toothless bucket under direct archaeological supervision. The service trenches were also cut using a tracked mini-digger with a toothless bucket under direct archaeological supervision.

4.2 During all of the ground works the exposed ground surfaces were inspected for archaeological features and the resulting topsoil stockpiles were monitored for archaeological artefacts and environmental material.

4.3 Drawings were produced of the archaeological features encountered at a scale of 1:20 for both sections and plans due to the size and simplicity of the feature. The feature was also recorded photographically, on 35mm colour slide and black and white print film and digitally at 5m pixel resolution. 1m and 2m bi-coloured poles were used as scales and a north pointer for orientation. For more detailed photography a 0.5m bi-coloured scale was used. In addition to this a written record was made of the features using a series of pre-printed pro formas. The site was levelled using a spot height of 48mOD in the roadway to the south of the site on the Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:10,000 mapping.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 The results of the watching brief are described below. In the text the context numbers for each archaeological deposit or feature are given in [] brackets. All heights are given as metres above Ordnance Datum (mOD) using the OS spot height described above.

5.2 The archaeological investigation showed that there were the remains of a narrow building running along the eastern frontage of the plot adjacent to the modern public highway (Figure 1). The building was at least 7.05m long and 2.2m wide and survived to a height of 0.4m (49.75mOD), and had been constructed from a single thickness of roughly squared sandstone blocks [03] which had been built directly into a recess [05] cut into the slope of the hillside [02] (Plate 2). The sandstone blocks ranged in size from 0.52m by 0.18m to 0.2m by 0.18m and did not bear any traces of tool marks or dressing. Where the wall had been cut into the hillside the void behind it had been backfilled with stone fragments and the previously excavated backfill.

- 5.3 The building appeared to have been extended at its southern end by 1.4m as the stonework ends at where the original end wall would have been and the structure was then extended by cutting away the earth bank and simply formed plastering the resulting earth face (Plate 3).
- 5.4 A simple doorway leading out to the street was recorded on the eastern side of the building towards the northern end (Plate 4). The threshold was composed of worn stone blocks with a small circular depression situated on the inner, northern side of the doorway. This feature appears to be the remains of the pivot point for the door (Figure 1).
- 5.5 The building had no foundations or evidence for internal structures. The floor [06] was made from compacted earth and had small amounts of coal dust and ash pressed into it in places along with small patches of clay filling a depression near the doorway (Figure 1) and one towards the southern end of the building. These appear to be the remains of attempts to maintain a level floor by filling in hollows created by wear.
- 5.6 The northern end of the building had been partially truncated by the construction of the washhouse, with its later land-drain, for the farmhouse which used to stand to the north of the development site.
- 5.7 No stratified artefacts were recovered from the fabric of the building or from the backfill within it and the nature of its construction is not readily dateable. However, the presence of quantities of unstratified 18/19th century and later material in the backfill of structure would seem to indicate a late 18th or early 19th century date for the building. No other archaeological finds or features were recorded on the development site.

6.0 Finds

- 6.1 Although there were no stratified finds from the remains of the building, moderate quantities of 18/19th century and later ceramics were encountered along with animal bone and a range of fragments of agricultural hand tools.
- 6.2 The majority of the finds were earthenware ceramics with smaller amounts of stoneware and later whiteware and porcelain. It seemed unlikely that this material was derived from the remains of the building and was probably a result of many years of manuring and rubbish disposal into the topsoil of the vegetable garden.
- 6.3 Six fragments of medieval pottery were recorded in the topsoil, though none were diagnostic beyond being able to say they were typical of 12-14th century material seen regionally and are also probably the result of manuring.
- 6.4 All of the animal bone encountered was from domestic species including cattle, sheep, pig and dog. A few single bones of rat and rabbit were also noted.

6.5 Metal finds were predominantly of broken parts of agricultural hand tools (hoes, rakes etc.) along with occasional horseshoes and structural bolts/nails. The only notable metal find was a 17th century George III farthing.

7.0 DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The simple manner of construction of the building with its single thickness of wall built from poorly fitting low quality sandstone blocks would seem to indicate that the building was probably only a single storey one. From the recorded remains it was not possible to determine if the building had had windows but if there had been then they would most likely have been on the eastern side facing on to the road.

7.2 With the building having been cut into hillside and having no form of dry-lining or damp coursing, this would have meant that it would have been damp for much of the year. The problems that there would have been with damp could be seen by the thick layers of lime plaster which had been repeatedly applied to the inner faces, particularly at the southern end where the wall was formed from the bare earth.

7.3 Although the interior had been plastered, it seems unlikely that the building had been used for habitation due to its size and location. However, the presence of the plaster would seem to indicate a building that was kept relatively clean, if somewhat damp at times. This coupled with its being cut into the slope of the hill where it would have experienced a smaller range of temperatures suggests that the building may have been some form of cool store, probably associated with the nearby farm.

7.4 The lack of dateable material from the structure and the simplicity of its construction make it difficult to be able to place the building in its historical context. The presence of medieval pottery in the topsoil along with quantities of post-medieval pottery does not necessarily indicate a medieval origin for the building and is probably the remains of manuring. The majority of the artifactual material encountered in the topsoil was of 18/19th century date. There were occasional ceramic fragments that could be 17th century, along with the George III farthing. These finds would seem to indicate the most likely earliest date for the structure. This is reinforced as the buildings alignment with the modern road and property boundaries would seem to indicate a construction date from when the village layout had already become more formalised. Having said this the most probable date for the building is likely to be 18/19th century.

References

- Muir R (1997) *The Yorkshire Countryside, A Landscape History*. Keele University Press: Edingburgh.
- Mills AD (1998) *Dictionary of English Place-names*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.

APPENDIX I

CONTEXT CATALOGUE

<i>Context Number</i>	<i>Description</i>
01	Topsoil.
02	Subsoil.
03	Stone wall.
04	Plaster on wall.
05	Construction cut for rear stone wall of building.
06	Compact earth floor.

HIGH STREET, SPOFFORTH

NORTH YORKSHIRE

ILLUSTRATIONS



Plate 1. Interior of the Remains of the Building. Looking north. Scales 1 & 2m.